

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action of May 27, 2003, has been carefully considered.

It is noted that claims 12-14 and 19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over the patent to Kern.

It is further noted that claims 15-18 and 20-21 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In view of the Examiner's rejection of the claims, Applicant has amended independent claim 1.

It should be mentioned that claim 1 now on file specifically defines a connecting element for insertion into ends of at least two hollow sections of different cross-section of a transverse beam of an automobile instrument panel, which connecting element has a frame with side walls extending in a direction x of insertion, and push-fit body shape-formed by extrusion onto the frame. The push-fit body has a smaller cross-section than the frame and contains lengths of the frame side walls so that the connecting element has two different cross-sections in the x direction.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims now on file differ essentially and in an unobvious, highly advantageous manner from the constructions disclosed in the reference.

Turning now to the reference, it can be seen that Kern discloses a press-fitted joint between a transom bar and a frame or sash bar for a window, door or the like. To begin with, Kern does not disclose a connecting element for insertion into ends of two hollow sections of a transverse beam of an automobile instrument panel, as in the presently claimed invention. Furthermore, Kern does not disclose a connecting element that has two different cross-sections in a direction of insertion, as in the presently claimed invention. The connecting piece of Kern is a block with hooks and drilled holes. The drilled holes are present for accepting screws. The connecting piece has hooks for engaging with ribs in a frame or sash bar which is in a vertical position relative to the connecting piece. The other end of the connecting piece is inserted through a lateral recess into the interior face of a transom bar. In the presently claimed invention, on the other hand, a connecting element is claimed which has two different cross-sections along

its extension in the x direction. A longitudinally arranged support arm can thus be pushed over each cross section, respectively, whereby the hollow support arms extend substantially along the same axis in the direction x of insertion. This is not disclosed by Kern. Kern connects a vertical and a horizontal bar and at least one of the bars is not a hollow section. In Kern, one connection works with hooks and ribs, while the other connection is only possible when the first connection is secured to the vertical bar. There is no disclosure by Kern of a connecting element configured with two different cross sections so that two hollow sections are slidable over the cross sections respectively so that the hollow sections extend longitudinally along a substantially common axis which extends in the insertion direction.

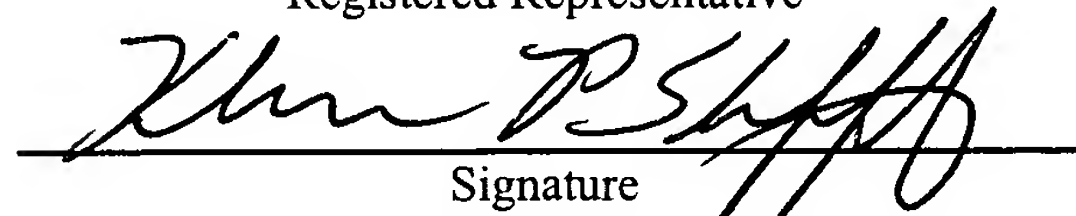
In view of these considerations, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 12-14 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over the above-discussed reference is overcome and should be withdrawn.

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on September 25, 2003:

Klaus P. Stoffel

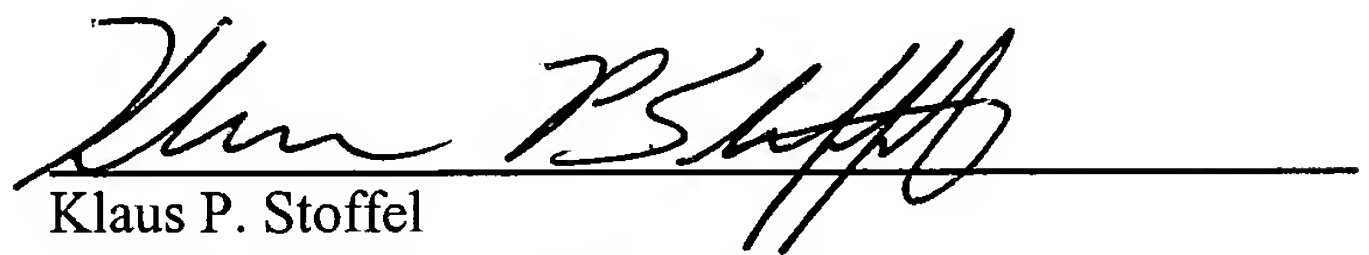
Name of applicant, assignee or
Registered Representative


Signature

September 25, 2003

Date of Signature

Respectfully submitted,



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